

Message Text

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51

ACTION EA-10

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FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

TO STATE WASHDC 558

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

USMISSION USUN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0497

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, PP

SUBJC: CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING INDEPENDENCE DATE

1. FOR THE FOURTH TIME, THE SETTING OF THE DATE OF PNG INDEPENDENCE IS BEING POSTPONED. IMMEDIATE OBSTACLE IS FAILURE OF HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY TO REACH AGREEMENT ON CONSTITUTION AND ORGANIC LAWS, ALTHOUGH ONLY FEW WEEKS AGO MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVED THAT AGREEMENTS HAD BEEN REACHED ON ALL ESSENTIAL ISSUES. DUST HAS NOT YET SETTLED, BUT AT LEAST SOME ELEMENTS OF PROBLEM ARE BECOMING CLEAR: A RENEGING ON SOME PREVIOUSLY REACHED AGREEMENTS, ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTIONS, MISUNDERSTANDINGS, PERSONAL AMBITION AND OPPORTUNISM.

2. SOMARE GOVERNMENT DID NOT PRESENT ITS CASE WELL, LEFT ITSELF WIDE OPEN TO ATTACK AND HAS RECEIVED DEVASTATING DENUNCIATIONS FROM BOTH UNITED PARTY (UP) AND NATIONAL PRESSURE GROUP (NPG) WHICH ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO AN UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE. COALITION GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED IN KIND, AND PERSONAL ATTACKS HAVE BECOME MORE BITTER. THE BLACK/WHITE ISSUE IS BEING DISCUSSED WITH INCREASING

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INTENSITY.

3. TWO BIGGEST ISSUES ARE CITIZENSHIP AND HEAD OF STATE. CITIZENSHIP ISSUE WAS REOPENED BECAUSE CHAN AND PPP, FEARING PROVISIONAL CITIZENS WOULD BECOME SECOND CLASS CITIZENS, DEMANDED THAT CABINET DO SO. HEAD OF STATE ISSUE RESULTED FROM CABINET DECISION TO PROPOSE QUEEN AS HEAD OF STATE. (COMMENT: LAVETT, DEPUTY HEAD OF AUSTRALIAN OFFICE, TOLD ME THIS WOULD BE VERY WELL RECEIVED IN PNG, BUT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE INDICATED OTHERWISE.)

4. IN ADDITION, ISSUE HAS RISEN OVER FACT THAT DRAFTING COMMITTEE DID NOT ADHERE CLOSELY TO INSTRUCTION OF HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY BUT MADE CHANGES WHICH LED TO CHARGES THAT SOMARE WAS TRYING TO SLIP SOMETHING OVER ON THE HA. (IN RESPONSE, COMMITTEE POINTED OUT THAT REPS FROM UP AND NPG WERE REPRESENTED ON DRAFTING COMMITTEE, AND MOREOVER, THE WHOLE DOCUMENT HAD TO GO BACK TO HA FOR A SECTION BY SECTION SCRUTINY).

5. MORE BASIC THAN THE ABOVE ARE OTHER ELEMENTS: (A) SOMARE IS TRYING TO BRING PNG TO INDEPENDENCE WITH A COALITION CABINET WHOSE MAJORITY IS SO THIN THAT IT CAN EVAPORATE IN ANY PASSING BREEZE; (B) WHEN SOMARE WAS FORCED TO AGREE TO A DETAILED CONSTITUTION AND ORGANIC LAWS PRIOR TO SETTING THE DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE HE PAINTED HIMSELF INTO A CORNER; (C) STRONG SENSE OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY EXISTING IN PNG MAKES EVERY MHA BELIEVE HE MUST PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN MAKING DECISIONS; (D) BUT LACK OF EDUCATION AND LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF WESTERN POLITICAL CONCEPTS MAKES IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR MANY MHA'S TO UNDERSTAND THE SUBJECTS THEY WANT TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT; (E) FURTHER, CULTURAL TRAITS INCLUDE A STRONG INCLINATION TO TALK THINGS OUT, A RELUCTANCE TO BITE THE BULLET WHEN FACED WITH A DECISION (EVEN AFTER SEEKING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION), AND NO SENSE OF HURRY.

6. SOMARE GOVERNMENT AS APPEARED WEAK AND INEFFECTUAL DURING PAST FEW WEEKS, AND UP AND NPG HAVE APPEARED AS CIRCLING WOLVES ABOUT POUNCE ON VICTIM. RIFT IS APPEARING

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IN UP, HOWEVER, WITH MHA ANTON PARAO CALLING FOR OUSTER OF TEI ABAL, AND BLATANT PERSONAL AMBITIONS OF MHA JOHN KAPUTIN IS LIKELY TO BECOME ISSUE IN NPG. OLMSTED

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